



**Highbarns Chalkmine Residents Group meeting  
Nash Mills Primary School  
Tuesday 19 November 2013  
6.30 pm**

**Attendees:**

Lisa Bayley  
Michele Berkeley  
Heidi Cutts  
Tracey Gill  
Steve Roberts  
Carly Simon  
Jennifer Taylor  
Richard Taylor

Cllr Anthony McKay – Dacorum Borough Council/Herts County Council  
Shane Flynn – Dacorum Borough Council  
Sheila Potts – Dacorum Borough Council  
Jan Madden  
Chris Milne– Hyder Consulting  
Mark Skittrall – Hyder Consulting  
Andrew Morris – BAM Ritchies  
Dan Lewis – BAM Ritchies

**Apologies**

Rodney Berkeley  
Andy Price  
Geoff Doole – Dacorum Borough Council

## **Completion timetable, demobilisation and closedown**

## **Action**

Andy Morris advised that the current plan is for infilling work to be completed by end of November, leaving validation, reinstatement and demobilisation to be completed. Closing down the project entirely will take until mid-January, so the contractors will be onsite beyond Christmas.

The collapse at No.1 Meadow Road has clearly changed the picture in terms of demobilisation. Work to address that was outlined later in the meeting but BAM Ritchies are in discussions with Hyder, DBC and Herts County Council (HCC) about assessing the collapse and proposed possible treatment works.

All - general agreement within the group that the end of November deadline was unlikely to be achieved given the amount of work still to be done.

AM advised that the November deadline relates to the infilling work – further work was expected but demobilisation of the site could begin while the validation and reinstatement work was undertaken. Site compounds would need to be demobilised so that reinstatement work could begin.

LB asked why additional probing work was being undertaken to the south end of 19 Highbarns – did this indicate that there were mineworkings extending beyond there?

SF explained that the infill work had continued right up to the north end of 17 Highbarns and it was not possible to validate the work so close to the house. Therefore validation tests were carried out at the far end of the properties to confirm that the work had treated the tunnel successfully and that there was no extension beyond the expected end of the tunnel. The results of the probing south of No. 19 were positive so that part of the treatment pan had now been signed off.

LB considered that this had been poorly communicated and that communication remained a problem at the site.

SF reminded the group of the previous discussions regarding communication and the need to balance information about works at individual properties with personal security. The approach that the group had agreed was to have multiple communication points rather than providing messages beyond the regular monthly newsletters that BAM

Ritchies use to summarise progress. He confirmed that all of the communication routes were still open, so that if anyone had questions or concerns at any time then there were several contact points for BAM Ritchies or DBC and others which could be used.

### **Reinstatement works**

Andy Morris outlined the approach for reinstatement. BAM Ritchies can only reinstate – there is no facility for betterment within the contract and it was important to understand this distinction.

SF confirmed that experience from previous sites shows that the HCA will not fund improvements but reinstatement only.

AM – for communal areas and highways and pathways agreements are needed with DBC and HCC. Herts Highways have agreed which areas should fall to the contractor to repair and which should be undertaken by Highways. AM explained that the intention was for Herts Highways' contractor Ringway to undertake all the works and BAM Ritchies had requested a price from Ringway so that this approach could be confirmed.

All – request for the agreement to be circulated so that it could be reviewed. LB represented strongly the view of the group that a properly co-ordinated approach to reinstatement of the public areas was needed so that the residents were not left with a legacy of 'patchwork' repairs.

SF agreed to circulate the plan to the group for discussion.

SF

Cllr McKay indicated that a stronger understanding of what had been agreed and how the works were to be undertaken was needed. Residents agreed. Therefore a proposal for a site walk was put forward, to involve Mike Penning along with HCC, DBC officers and residents. This was to assess the roads and pavements, compare the damage to previous conditions where possible and review the agreed the share of responsibilities. Cllr McKay agreed to co-ordinate this along with LB.

AM and LB

All- the reinstatement should not only address the on-site issues. There were also deterioration in the roads leading up to the site because of the traffic. All agreed that this should be part of the discussion with HCC and confirmed that it was necessary for Highways officers to become more engaged now that the project had reached this stage.

SF advised that he had arranged a meeting with Rob Smith the relevant

SF

Assistant Director at HCC and Highways colleagues to discuss the No.1 Meadow Road collapse and would use the meeting to facilitate increased involvement by HCC.

LB – in respect of the green areas, these need to be reinstatement to a high standard as they are communal areas which are used by local children as play areas and by residents as green spaces. So far the work in the Highbarns compound area was not of the required standard.

AM confirmed that the area would be returfed – seeding was no longer being used and that specialists would be used where necessary. SF agreed that DBC would be the client for reinstatement in these areas and that this would be managed by the estates team or housing officers as appropriate.

AM – for individual properties an agreement would be made with each property owner regarding the reinstatement that would take place.

MS advised that letters had gone to residents recently to arrange post-works condition surveys. These are designed to assess whether there has been any change in the condition of the property by comparing the results with the pre-condition surveys.

TG asked what would happen if the surveys showed that there was a difference?

MS confirmed that an agreement would be made with each property owner about what work should be undertaken to address such issues. AM confirmed that where results of the surveys were known in the next few weeks they would still be on site to complete any works instructed by Hyder. Where damage had occurred and it was caused by the contractor they would return to the site if necessary to complete the repair even if it were after the demobilisation period.

AM also advised that BAM Ritchies would be working on the nearby chalkmine treatment works at Welling Hatfield so would continue to have a local presence for some time.

SR sought assurance that the reinstatement agreements with each property would be done quickly so that all works could be completed before demobilisation.

AM stated that a list of all the works had already been drawn up. This could be circulated for agreement but, in practice, individual agreements

were needed for each property. These need to incorporate the results of the condition surveys and any instructions from Hyder in regard to them.

MB asked if there was someone with overall responsibility for managing the reinstatement process.

AM stated that this was being done in close co-operation with Hyder but and that responsibility for completing the reinstatement works would be maintained after site closure.

RT sought reassurance around some wider issues, such as the return of the planters, the proper removal of the temporary road closure bollards and the clearance of all drains.

AM advised that these were all within the requirements of the contract and the reinstatement plans. He agreed to circulate a list of reinstatement works to be undertaken.

AM

### **Validation report and individual reports for homeowners**

MS outlined the process for overall validation and completion of the site. BAM Ritchies will compile a completion report which Hyder will then use to produce an overall validation report for the site. Extracts for the report will be available for use by individual homeowners as and when they need to confirm that the mine close to or underneath their property had been treated.

All – there were a number of questions around this process relating to the timetable for the reports, the process for lifting the Derelict Land Clearance Order (which might require a statutory report) and the position regarding planning permissions for work to be carried out at properties.

SF agreed to clarify the requirements regarding the lifting of the Derelict Land Clearance Order and the timetable for the process. He also agreed to discuss with planning officers the process for removing references to the chalkmine from planning surveys.

SF

### **Impact of No.1 Meadow Road and proposed actions with Highways**

SF explained the position regarding the collapse at No.1 Meadow Road. At this point it is not clear whether it is related to the mine or is an entirely separate issue. If it is not connected with the known mine works then it may be either an isolated feature relating to one-off chalk mining – sometime referred to as a 'denehole' - or it may be an indication of works

extending away from the site to other areas.

DBC and HCC have agreed to co-fund some exploratory work to meet their shared responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act to determine whether this represented a threat to properties or members of the public. He also thanked BAM Ritchies for their prompt actions to secure the site and advise the property owner and all relevant parties of the collapse at the time that it occurred.

Once the assessment work had been completed a treatment proposal would be drafted. However, depending on the findings, this may require the need to seek a new Derelict Land Clearance Order and seek approval and funding for treatment to be undertaken. SF stressed that at this stage there is no authorisation for treatment work to take place. He also confirmed that the funding provided for the Highbarns chalkmine by the HCA and the DCLG could not be used for this new site as it was outside the existing DCLO boundary

The emergency road closure would remain in force until HCC agreed on a course of action.

All – there is a need for wider communication regarding this collapse so that residents could understand the implications regarding planning permissions and property surveys in the wider area.

SF advised that he was in close contact with the resident and they were looking into insurance issues. He agreed to develop a communications plan to follow once the probing work had clarified the nature of the collapse.

SF

### **Agenda for proposed public meeting – Wednesday 18 December**

It was agreed not to hold a public meeting at this point as there was still a considerable amount of work to do. SF would look at a revised date in the New Year.

SF

### **Any other Business**

Residents had received notice of a crane attending the area within the next couple of days and had been asked to keep part of the highway around Highbarns and East Green clear

SP agreed to look into why this crane was needed (the assumption was

SP

that it relate to work at Gade Tower)

Water monitoring is continuing on the site but there were reports of different approaches to this with the monitors either going into gardens without first seeking permission or not going in at all

MS advised that water monitoring would continue for some time and agreed to look into why there were apparent inconsistencies in approach.

MS